

MAY 2020

ISSUE 20-5

The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

AT A GLANCE

Pg. 2, Leadership

“Who is Jesus? The Seven Signs in the Gospel of John,” Session Highlights, Prayer Focus

Pg. 4, Discipleship

“Slow Me Down,” Ekklesia, Small Groups

Pg. 6, Music Ministry

“Music to Calm Your Spirit”

Pg. 7, High School & Middle School

“What Does God Look Like?”

Pg. 8, Children’s Ministry

“Raising Resilient Kids on God’s Word”

Pg. 9, Church Family

Milestone Celebrations

Leadership

WHO IS JESUS? THE SEVEN SIGNS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN SERMON SERIES (MAY 17-JULY 12)

From Pastor Chad

Attached to the exterior side of the door to my study is a fairly small sign that bears the single word, "Pastor." That little sign lets people know that beyond the door is where one is likely to find one of the men who ministers the Word of God to the people of God at FPC. That sign is a very helpful tool if someone is seeking to meet with me. The sign on my door is not a pastor itself. The door to which it is attached is not a pastor. In this case, I am the pastor to

which the sign points people. Some signs are big while others are small. Some are flashy while others are simple. No matter their size or their aesthetic appeal, a sign's main purpose is not to draw attention to itself but to point to someone or something else.

Signs are not always stuck on a door or hanging on a post. If you are out for a walk and you see dark clouds forming on the horizon and birds flying in the opposite direction, then you have witnessed two signs that a storm is likely coming; you would be wise to get inside soon. In

the Book of Exodus we are told of some signs (ten plagues) that Moses performed before Pharaoh. The signs pointed to the reality of the LORD's sovereignty over Egypt and to the truth that Moses as his representative was proclaiming his Word. Pharaoh would have been wise to heed the signs, repent of his sin, and let the Israelites go to worship the LORD. He proved to be hard hearted and foolish by not understanding the signs nor believing in the one to whom they pointed.

In the first half of the Gospel of John we see Jesus performing what the apostle calls "signs" on several occasions. Most evangelical scholars agree that there are in fact seven such signs between chapters 1-12, prompting many to call that section of the Gospel the Book of Signs. The signs are identifiable because (1) they were performed by Jesus in public, (2) John calls each of them by the term "sign," and (3) they point to God's glory displayed in Christ (from Andreas Kostenberger). This summer, Mackay and I will be preaching a sermon series in which we will be taking a look at these signs to help us all to understand how they point us to Jesus and how in doing so they collectively reveal more fully the glory of who Jesus is and what he has accomplished.

The scripture texts and titles for this series can be found in the table on this page. Small group leaders will be receiving a copy of Anthony Selvaggio's book, *The Seven Signs: Seeing the Glory of Christ in the Gospel of John* as an aid to their own preparation for small group discussions of the sermons. ■

SERMON SERIES, MAY 17 - JULY 12

May 17	John 1:1-18	Jesus Is the One to Whom All the Signs Point
May 24	John 2:1-11	Jesus Is the Maker of the New Covenant
May 31	John 2:13-22	Jesus Is the New Temple
June 7	John 4:46-54	Jesus Is the Life-giving Word
June 14	John 5:1-29	Jesus Is One with God the Father
June 21	John 6:1-35	Jesus Is the Bread from Heaven
June 28	John 9:1-41	Jesus Is the Light of Life
July 5	John 11:1-45	Jesus Is the Conqueror of Death
July 12	John 20:24-31	Jesus Is the Christ, the Son of God

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are some highlights from the April 28 meeting.

- The Session considered Colossians 4:7-18 for its devotional before the meeting. The theme was the joy we have to serve the church together as those called to ministry in Christ.
- The Session discussed its ongoing shepherding ministry to the people of FPC, sharing news from recent contacts that were made with numerous members as we seek to stay in touch with the people of FPC during the coronavirus restrictions. Prayer was offered on behalf of those members.
- Stewardship and Finance reported that as of the end of March 2020 tithes and offerings toward the church's 2020 general budget are at \$265,013, which is 28% of the 2020 budget. This is above the average of 23% (2015-2019) our church has historically received by the end of March. Our expenses were \$222,805, 23% of the budget, for a net gain of \$42,208. Praise was given to God in prayer for His financial blessing.
- The Session received Venada Peebles as a new member. The Session also approved the request from Phyllis Aemisegger to transfer her membership to the Jonesville First Presbyterian Church in Jonesville, Michigan.
- The Session approved a staff recommendation that we continue worship and ministries via virtual means until at least May 24. More information will be shared with the congregation in this issue of the Diligent as well as in other FPC communications.
- The Session approved the request from Tom Freeland to step down from Session for personal reasons. Tom remains a member in good standing and retains his ordination as an elder at FPC. He is eligible to serve on Session in the future.
- The chairmen of the committees of the Session gave reports of the work and ministry they are overseeing. Prayer was offered after each report, asking for the Lord's guidance and blessing.
- A season of prayer was had for various needs within our congregation, community, and world. ■

PRAYER FOCUS

MAY 3 - Widows & Widowers

MAY 10 - Mother's Day

MAY 17 - 2020 High School Graduates

MAY 24 - Memorial Day: Praying for the national leaders and U.S. military personnel

MAY 31 - Bridge Europe/Pikes: Praying for the families and ministries of those serving Muslim immigrants in Europe



Discipleship

SLOW ME DOWN

From Pastor Mackay

Though we will see what guidance emerges from our government leaders in the coming days, it seems that cracks are forming in our overall patience with stay-at-home orders. All of us are eager to get back to something of the life we knew six weeks ago. As we see that light dawning (maybe), let's take a moment to consider our re-entry into normal life.

I encourage that consideration because, for so many of us, "normal" life means one thing: being way too busy. Yes, busyness, that truth of life that we all love to hate. No one denies that our culture is filled with more opportunity and more information than ever before, and for many of us, the siren song to take on far more than we should is hard to resist. To paraphrase the great Dr. Ian Malcom of *Jurassic Park*, we are so concerned with whether or not we *could*, that we don't think about whether or not we *should*.

We love our busyness. For one, it makes us feel needed and successful. We think, "If my days are so jam-packed and I am so needed by so many people that it's driving me absolutely crazy, then surely I must be valuable!" Kevin DeYoung, in his excellent book *Crazy Busy*, diagnoses this, among many other excuses for our busyness, as manifestations of pride. Whether we overload ourselves for the praise of others, to fill our homes with more and more possessions, or from a need to simply control everything, it's all born from one source: we are focusing on me, me, me. Even when we seem to be serving others, it's all because we have a certain vision for what we want our lives and identities to be. Proudful busyness can also manifest itself, as we've already hinted, as a way to bolster ourselves above others in our minds. When asked, "How are you?" (at least before COVID took hold) would you respond with, "Busy!"? It's the ultimate humble-brag. We spotlight our burdens and exhaustion, all the while relishing our status and importance.

There will undoubtedly be times in life when we will have a great deal to do. We should work hard in the callings God has given us. But, as there can be such *sinful* busyness in our lives, that which flows not from faith (Rom. 14:23) but



CRAZY BUSY

A (MERCIFULLY) SHORT BOOK ABOUT A (REALLY) BIG PROBLEM

KEVIN DEYOUNG

pride, we shouldn't be surprised to find that Christians often hate their busyness. See if Dr. DeYoung's words of confession ring true with you:

"I can think of several moments in just the past couple of months when I've muttered to myself, 'What am I doing? How did I get myself into this mess? When will I ever get my life under control? How long can I keep this up? Why can't I manage my time? Why did I say yes to this? How did I get so busy?' I've bemoaned my poor planning and poor decision making. I've complained about my schedule. I've put in slipshod work because there wasn't time for any other kind. I've missed too many quiet times and been too impatient with my kids. I've taken my wife for granted and fed important relationships with leftovers. I've been too busy to pursue God with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength."

Our addiction to busyness crushes the things that we *know* are truly important, and we hate it. Statistics burst at us that people, young and old, are showing physical symptoms of over-stress. But what can we do?

Continues on page 5...

Continued from page 4...

As a bit of a sidebar, let me first agree with Dr. Ric Rodeheaver in an article he wrote for The Gospel Coalition called, “Normal Again, Thanks to COVID-19.” He argues that the solution for worldly busyness is not “sanctified busyness.” Our churches can be tempted to reflect worldly maxims: “More is better.” “Busier means more effective.” Let’s open our eyes to the people around us with love and hospitality on our minds, and not feel the solution is sprinkling Jesus on our frenetic lives.

So, what should we do? Let me suggest taking these non-ordinary days as an opportunity. Think about it this way. It won’t be long until we’re all getting messages like, “We’re Open!” The classes, sports, lessons, and clubs will kick back into gear. So, take time now, while we all have time, and think about whether those things are serving our call to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Pray that you would have the strength to say a quick, kind “No!” to those activities that are only prideful means to build your worldly stature; either in your own eyes or the eyes of others. Pray, also, that you would say “Yes!” to those things you may have lost or perhaps have never had that are directed toward the Glory of God.

Say yes to his Word, yes to worshipping him on Sunday, and yes to staying within your limits. Say yes to “margin” in your schedule, so when (not if) the car breaks or your daughter needs you for a few hours, you can respond with joy and not the irritable terror of seeing your house of cards fall down.

Our busyness can have the narcotic effect of half-convincing us that everything is fine, that we will never die, and that we need not worry about our standing before an Eternal, Almighty God. Yet, a day is coming when all that will come crashing down around us. Will we have spent our days laboring for that which will last forever? ■

EKKLESIA & SMALL GROUPS

Small Groups

Our Small Groups continue to connect in various ways. Zoom video conferencing is a popular method among some, while many are simply calling one another regularly.

Ekklesia Adult Bible Study

Our Ekklesia Adult Bible Study of Hebrews continues on our website (www.fpclw.org) and on our YouTube channel.

Discipleship Study of Prayer

Coming soon! Look to YouTube for a 4-part series on prayer. Now is a wonderful time to grow in our prayer lives, and in this study, we will think about our vital calling to pray.

Music Ministry

MUSIC TO CALM YOUR SPIRIT

From Vince Treadway

And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.

-1 Samuel 16:23

I have found music to provide great solace, peace, comfort, and healing, especially in times of anxiety, trouble, or distress. Now is certainly a time of concern and upheaval for many with what is required to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic changing the patterns of most people's lives. Just as King Saul was made "refreshed and well," so can we be soothed and uplifted by music.

I realize that everyone has their favorite styles of music and artists, but I thought I would share a few of my favorites with you to give a try. I should clarify the purpose of this list because not all music that I listen to is for achieving peace, solace, and comfort. Sometimes I want to listen to music to be energized, perhaps for exercising or doing a job. Also, I may listen to learn a piece for one of the choirs or myself, so I will listen over and over to help get it in my ear. The list I have prepared here has one primary purpose-to provide music to meditate, pray, relax, and rest; maybe even fall asleep! I have provided titles as well as links (URL codes) to this music in case you want to look up the music on a device, computer, or music account of your choice. This same list has been added to the Music Ministry page of our website and can be accessed at <<http://www.fpclw.org/ministries/music-ministry/>> to use the live links.

While you are listening to this music, I would also encourage you to read and meditate on Scripture, particularly those texts that speak to the peace of God, such as:

"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." Isaiah 26:3

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7

"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints." 1 Corinthians 14:33

"In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

Following is the list of my recommendations for calming music. I could go on for hours, so this list is not intended to be conclusive, but rather a starting point. My prayer is that you find "rest for your soul" as you listen and meditate on God's Word.

Chopin Nocturnes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtIW2r1EalM&list=PLrc5kcEPpozKNdeJatoxHDLQrEOPf9gRI>

Chant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNIIFdDN5P8>

Voces8 (a choral ensemble)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VoQsXkOrZA>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icjcVr6j8gc>

Spiegel im Spiegel for Cello and Piano by Arvo Part

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZe3mXlnfNc>

Hauser—Adagio for Strings by Samuel Barber

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hc8gYoXkLZ4>

Pie Jesu by Durufle, sung by Sarah Connolly

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ytt25RRcWGg>

Be Still My Soul by Libera

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwkPsKe-39Y>

Is He Worthy? Andrew Peterson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Olahc83Kvp4> ■

High School & Middle School

WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE?

From Shane Miller

What does God look like? At the end of the first century, the time in which the book of Revelation was written, Christians were enduring a time of persecution in the Roman empire. Therefore, if you were a Christian, not only would your reputation be on the line, but your life as well. It is no surprise, then, that we read John, in the first chapter of Revelation, describe himself saying, "I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."

The apostle John, being a faithful witness to the good news of Jesus, was punished for his love for Christ by the government by means of exile to the island of Patmos. During these times of social distancing, we recognize the pain of isolation. Imagine, though, that the government imposed isolation upon you not for the benefit of your health but as a punishment for your love for Jesus. Though Christians in America enjoy a fair amount of peace and religious freedom, we can still imagine the pain that John and other Christians endured during that time as they suffered for the name of Christ.

Now, I'm going to ask a question that is going to seem unrelated to the question of Christian suffering and hardship but actually carries much relevance in regards to the subject: what do you think God looks like? For many, their picture of God is an old man. Perhaps God looks like your aged grandfather with a long white beard. It's difficult for him to stand up and walk around, so he sits and rests upon his throne. Maybe he even has a hearing aid so that he would be able to hear the prayers of the world. If you were a Christian living at the end of the first century in Rome, enduring harsh forms of suffering and persecution, and you pictured God as your grandpa, what would your

level of confidence in him be? Yes, you might be fed to the lions, but that version of God looks like he actually needs more help than you do!

The revelation that John was given of Jesus, though, gives us a very different picture. In Revelation 1:12-16, John is given a vision of Jesus, and he tells us what he sees, saying, "I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance."

The descriptions of Jesus in this vision are full of metaphorical meaning. Jesus' white hair, far from describing old age, was a sign of wisdom. The golden sash was the garb of a king. Jesus' eyes of flaming fire are able to see past all pretense, evil, and hypocrisy. Feet like bronze make Him steadfast and

immovable. To top it all off, a sword comes out of His mouth, representing the word of God, which is powerful and effective, cutting to the heart. Let us reassess, then-with a vision of Jesus such as this, what would your confidence level look like as a first-century Christian suffering in Rome? John, by means of putting his vision of Jesus on display in the book of Revelation, reminds us that in times of suffering and difficulty, our focus is best placed not upon ourselves, not upon the potential for things to get better or worse, but in our risen Savior. God has graciously forgiven, reconciled, and given sinners everything they need in him no matter what the circumstance by giving his Son to live, die, and rise from the dead. Let us place our full trust and confidence in him! ■



Children's Ministry

RAISING RESILIENT KIDS ON GOD'S WORD

From Kelly Harrington

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." -Philippians 4:6-7

My fifteen-year-old told me some time ago, pre-coronavirus pandemic, that her generation (Generation Z or iGen, depending on where you look) is known as the anxious and depressed generation. This statement was curious to me, as is most of the information that my teenagers bring to me, so I had to take a look. And yes, I found some truth in it. According to the American Psychological Association's Stress in America (2018) and several other mental health articles, more than 90% of teenagers and college students identify themselves as anxious or depressed. Still, I was interested in knowing more, so I did more reading, and we had a lengthy discussion about it.

It seems that multiple factors are at work on our kids, both external and internal, which are giving way to this very high percentage of self-diagnosed anxiety and depression. The first is that our iGen kids are more aware of mental health counseling, disorders, and vocabulary than we were at their age. In a purposeful effort to educate kids about mental health issues and help destigmatize mental illnesses, our kids have learned a few things about "triggers" and "disorders" which weren't so commonly talked about a few decades back, although they are nothing new. Add to that our persistent encouragement to "talk to someone," and they have become more aware of things like "test anxiety" and "mood disorders" than we were. However, other research shows that only about 32% of 10,000 teens interviewed face to face met diagnostic criteria for an anxiety disorder (Psychology Today, 2020).

Additionally, psychologists point to the multiple traumatic events that have hemmed in their childhood years, such as the results and ongoing threats of terrorism, school shootings, and political division, which are constant reminders that the

world outside is a dangerous place. On the inside, our kids are growing up with the intense need to succeed emotionally, academically, and socially, all while the world is watching them through social media and 'liking' it or not. Now, add to all of that this new invisible virus that has just dramatically halted the world as they know it, and no one can tell them what things will look like next week.

But let's remember, we have always had stress and the world has always been a dangerous place to grow up. Many of us grew up in times of war, economic distress, and political unrest, and we not only made it through, but we finished school, got married, had children, and continued to serve God and others. I am not making light of tremendous struggle and significant loss during those times, but rather acknowledging that amid dangers all around, God was able to shape our hearts and minds to become resilient to the suffering. "For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:3-4).

Christians, our hope is not in the dangerous places of the world, but it is God and his promise of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (ref. 2 Cor. 4:8-10). Having persevered so far, we are even now called to intentionally face these uncertain times while we now prepare our kids to do the same thing. Don't be anxious, pray with thanksgiving for what the Lord will do and he will give you peace (Phil. 4:13). When times are not easy, we can give thanks to God for the opportunity to disciple our children in standing firm on God's Word and learning to endure difficulties as they grow! We must model and lead them in the same source of hope that we have, the unchanging and everlasting promises of his Word (ref. Psalm 119:104-105). Does this guarantee their safety from all harm? Absolutely not, but it does equip them to become resilient to the trials they will encounter along the way. For Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

No one wants this present danger of COVID-19 to continue another day, but let us disciple our

Continues on page 9...

Continued from page 8...

children to humbly endure the changes, disappointments, struggles, and hardships that we cannot change while we have the opportunity to do so. Lean into the lessons God has for us. Several people have asked me in the last few weeks about how to help their children handle their feelings of anxiety and depression through this uncertain time. My answer is that our children will learn from what we authentically model for them at home; if I worry, they will learn to worry, and if I pray, they will learn to pray. When we listen and talk to them about their fears, confess to them when we feel the same, seek God in his Word, and draw near to him in prayer, we are showing them the way for God to build in them resilient hearts and minds. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). ■

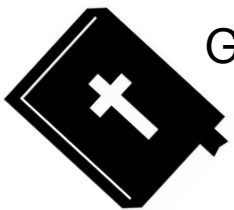


Happy Mother's Day!

We give thanks to God for our mothers and grandmothers and pray that they are blessed with the joy of the Lord for all they do in service to him, his church, and their families.

GRADUATE SUNDAY

Congratulations to our 2020 high school graduates! We will honor Lesleigh Miller, Garret Reynolds, and Matthew Roe on Graduation Sunday, May 17th.



Church Family

MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

May 2, Johnnie Friend
May 2, Sarah Keen
May 3, Charles Schmidt
May 3, Fox Rawlings
May 3, Venada Peoples
May 5, Parker Matteson
May 6, Liz Sebring
May 6, Luke Cain
May 8, Trish Kohl
May 8, Aaron Nelson
May 10, Dale Bourdette
May 10, Tatum Lewis
May 11, Auden Kemp
May 11, Savannah Kemp
May 13, Jackie Jones
May 15, Gene Glentzer
May 18, Kandi Lamb
May 18, Mary Miller
May 19, Milo Miller
May 19, Ruth Gilman
May 19, Thomas Mullins
May 21, Beth Buhrman
May 21, Gil Wingate
May 21, Ilyssa Harrington
May 23, Chuck Clegg
May 23, Cody Moyer
May 23, Josh Behr
May 23, Keely Ruth Reynolds
May 26, Ezra Miller
May 27, Major John I Benner
May 27, Ronald Horn
May 29, Donna Richert
May 30, Diana Schmidt
May 30, LaLa Ingram

ANNIVERSARIES

May 2, Stewart & Michelle Hurst
May 4, Mackay & Rachel Smith
May 16, Michael & Libby Matteson
May 16, Thomas & Debra Mullins
May 24, Todd & Liz Sebring
May 29, J.B. & Leigh Ann Wynn



First Presbyterian Church of Lake Wales
 16 N 3rd St, Lake Wales, FL 33853
 Phone: 863.676.0711
www.fpclw.org

CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

2020

John Dubois
 Stewart Hurst
 Ed Lamb
 Fox Rawlings

2021

Mike Berkau
 Paul Benner

2022

Frank Hunt III
 John Matteson
 Vince Treadway

2023

Scott Crews
 Tom Freeland
 Doug Pace

DEACONS

2020

David Bass
 Lynne Hulen
 Rob McCollum
 David Kennedy Nelson

2021

David Caldwell
 Michael Kahler
 Carl McCollum
 Tony Thomas

2022

Bea Meeker
 Aaron Nelson
 Mary Youmans

Moderator: Rev. Chad Reynolds
Vice Moderator: Rev. Mackay Smith
Clerk of Session: Ed Lamb
Chairman of Deacons: Rob McCollum
Deacon Secretary: David Kennedy Nelson
Chm. of the Congregation: Jake Cockrell
Treasurer: Michelle Hurst (2020-2021)
Asst. Treasurer: Daniel Hunt (2020-2021)