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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.”

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“THE CHOSEN” AND PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

From Pastor Mackay

A visual age is a challenge for a people of the Book. Christians are to be devoted to the inspired, inerrant Word of God (2 Tim 3:16-17) as our one rule of faith and practice. Yet, we live in a world where some of our most influential stories are told through visual media (movies, television, etc.). It is a natural impulse, then, that Christians in recent years have used all kinds of visual media to retell the story of the Bible.

You’ve probably heard about (and probably seen) *The Chosen*, a live-action, episodic account of Jesus’ earthly ministry produced by Angel Studios. I’ve had a few of you ask me about *The Chosen*, and I am always helped by getting my thoughts out in written form, so let me share a few thoughts with you. My thesis is: While we shouldn’t fear *The Chosen*, it carries a particular danger of supplanting the Bible in our minds as the one and only true way that we know Jesus.

Two personal admissions: First, I haven’t seen *The Chosen*, and I don’t really intend to watch it. I’ve seen a clip or two, so I get the style and appreciate the artistry involved, but I haven’t seen the whole thing. You can throw this article away right now if you’d like, but you need to know that my thoughts below are *why* I haven’t watched it and don’t feel the need to.

Secondly, I appreciate visual mediums of art, and I think Christians should use them to tell good, redemptive stories. Maybe it’s because I’m a child of the 80’s or because there are many hours of VHS footage at my parents house filmed by a young Mackay, but I like a well-made movie. You can ask Rachel, who kindly endured a recent documentary we watched about Industrial Light and Magic, the special effects company founded by George Lucas as he made the original *Star Wars* film. Visual storytelling is a valid form of art. It can be helpful to believers and God-honoring.

Finally, I think that faithful retellings of the story of the Bible is a good way to teach the Bible to (especially) our children and ourselves. I love *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, *The Biggest Story*, and other such works. Now: the authors of these works will tell you that they must never take the

place of the Bible. However, they are helpful aids. A related note: in such media I believe pictures of Jesus can be fine. I’ll fine-tune this a bit below, but at the outset I don’t think a visual depiction of Jesus is necessarily problematic.

So, it seems like I’ve made a great case for everyone to watch *The Chosen* so far. Why am I cautious about it? It comes down to the realism of *The Chosen* as it handles its subject, and the role the Bible should play in our lives. As we began, we want *only* the Bible to shape our hearts, minds, and consciences. *The Chosen* endangers that desire. I think there are two Biblical concepts to take into account here.

Chiefly, we are confronted with a matter of the second commandment (Exodus 20:4). God commands that images are not to be worshipped. God chose, at Sinai, to reveal himself through word, not image (Deut 4:12), thus to make an image representing him (like the Israelites tried to do with the Golden Calf), is a heinous sin. In the New Testament, God revealed himself visibly in Jesus Christ (John 14:9), but Jesus is now reigning in Heaven. Thus, just as the Israelites were not to worship images of the invisible God, so Christians should not worship images of the Jesus we do not now see. We are to worship Jesus, not pictures of Jesus.

Now, here's the rub that Christians have been dealing with forever: where's the line between using a picture of Jesus to teach about Jesus and worshipping a picture of Jesus? I doubt anyone who watches *The Chosen* would ever claim to be worshipping the visual depiction of Jesus therein. But, discretion and honesty have to come into play. Is devotion to *The Chosen* increasing or decreasing our devotion to the Bible? (Who hasn't said, "Why read the book when I can see the movie?") Are you more excited to have people watch a show or more excited to go to the Word with them? When you *think* about Jesus: do you find your thoughts shaped by God's holy Word, or by a television series? This is why I speak of the realism of *The Chosen* being a problem. Gritty, realistic visuals are so very powerful! They connect quickly to our hearts, minds, and emotions. So, we must be careful with them all the more.

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By the way, this plays into my counsel on pictures of Jesus overall. Drawings of Jesus, such as in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, communicate that Jesus was a real person but do less to form our consciences regarding what that real person was actually like. I think photo-realistic depictions of Jesus are more problematic.

The second issue we deal with is what we call the sufficiency of Scripture. God's word makes very plain that God's testimony in his Son is the final word on himself and salvation (Hebrews 1:1-4). We are not to expect any further revelation (words directly from God to people) until Jesus returns. God has given us what we need in the Bible!

All the excitement, then, about *The Chosen* may be founded on something implicit like, "We've found something better than the Bible." Or, at least, "We have a boring Bible; but here's something that will finally liven it up!" All such ideas cast doubt on the Biblical fact that the Bible is enough. I would especially point out that the creator of *The Chosen* is on record as saying, "Get used to different." I have also seen (though, note well, on a trusted pastor's social media and not on a news site) that Jesus says, "I am the Law of Moses," In a future episode.

Are you aware that this is not a quote from the Bible, but is a quote from the Book of Mormon? It seems clear that a faithful, Biblical retelling of the Jesus story is not at top of his list.

What about other good devotionals and Bible commentaries, then? These are good because they are not seeking to add to or amend Scripture, but to explain it. A good commentary is entirely devoted to discovering the meaning of the original text, not to present new material.

Two final thoughts. First, what I'll call the *Veggietales* principle. While retellings of the Bible may be OK, Christians should nevertheless continually build a growing love for and knowledge of the Bible as they mature. If a six year old thinks of vegetables at the mention of David and Goliath, fine. But if the same can be said of a forty year old lifetime church member, then that Christian has some growing to do!

And, I'll conclude with this: *The Chosen* is a fad. Just like so many shows, books, and movies in this throw-away culture; this particular take on the Jesus story will flare and then pass away. It is only God's word that will not pass away. It is only his word that shows us the true Jesus. It is only his word that the Spirit will use to bring sinners to salvation! Let us root ourselves in that word. ■



Advent Sermon Series

THE MAJOR GOSPEL OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Advent is a time to worship God who is faithful to his promises. This year, we will look together at those promises through the lens of the minor prophets. In these unique voices we find the darkness of human sin, the grace of a loving God, and the hope of his chosen Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Every Sunday we celebrate that Jesus has come and he is coming again. Come and worship!

November 27	Amos 4:13	The God of Power and Might
December 4	Hosea 3	Repent and Be Saved
December 11	Jonah 3	God's Mercy on the Nations
December 18	Habakkuk 3	Waiting on the Lord
Saturday, December 24 at 6:00pm	Zechariah 9	A King is Coming
December 25	Micah 4:1-7; 5:1-5	A King Born in Bethlehem
January 1	Joel 3	Judgment and Salvation

Associate Pastor Search

Associate Pastor for Family Discipleship Search Update

Pray this month for:

Give thanks to God that several good connections have been made in the last few weeks. That God would call challenge some from our congregation to minister to our families.

That God's will be done in our church. ■



SAVE THE DATE

Annual Congregational Meeting

December 11th following
worship in the fellowship hall.

PLEDGING TO THE 2023 OPERATIONAL BUDGET

Information on the 2023 budget has been distributed through the mail. The budget has been approved by the diaconate and the session, and will come before the congregation for a final vote on December 11.

You are invited to prayerfully submit a written pledge towards the 2023 budget in the weeks ahead. This pledge is an opportunity for you to discuss and affirm your commitment to the efforts of First Presbyterian Church in worship, discipleship, evangelism, and servanthood next year.

May God be glorified by our commitment today and throughout our lives!

- Church officers and their families will pledge Nov. 6
- The congregation are invited to pledge Nov. 13 and 20 ■

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are highlights from the meeting on October 25.

- The Session continued a study of *The Shepherd Leader* by Timothy Witmer. A strategy for forming Shepherding Groups continues to be refined, looking to next year for implementation.
- Needs of the congregation were shared, and a time of prayer was held for the people and ministries of our church.
- The Nominations Committee reported that officer training is continuing Wednesday evenings at 5:15pm. The committee will present a slate of nominees for elder and deacon before the November session meeting. The potential nominees will be interviewed by the elders and the slate of nominees certified during the session meeting.
- Stewardship and Finance reported from their October 11th meeting.
 - As of the end of September, YTD giving was at 66% of the budget against YTD expenses at 60% of the budget. Net year to date is +\$54,237. The Operating Fund balance was \$248,119.
 - The 2023 operating budget, having been approved by diaconate, was voted to be passed on to the congregation for a vote.
 - Church officers will pledge to the 2023 operating budget on November 6. The congregation will pledge to the budget on November 13 and 20.
- The annual stated congregational meeting was set for December 11 following morning worship. The congregation will vote on the 2023 operating budget and church officers.

PRAYER FOCUS

NOVEMBER 6 - All Saint's

NOVEMBER 13 - Veteran's Day

NOVEMBER 20 - Thanksgiving

Care Center Thanksliving Camp

NOVEMBER 27 - Advent Season

• Youth Council reported that a student service project is being planned soon.

• Missions Committee reported that the Bridge: Europe Visit Team will report during the Small Group hour on November 13.

• Rob Quam was approved for pulpit supply on November 20. ■

Discipleship

ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

Join us for our weekly mid-week Discipleship Program

6:00pm - Family Supper

6:30pm - Announcements/Dismissal of Children and Youth on 2nd and 4th Wednesdays

6:45pm - Program

7:25pm - Dismissal

Weekly Rotation

1st Wednesdays - **Potluck and Fellowship** (meat and dessert is provided; bring a side dish to share!)

2nd Wednesdays - **Breakout Night** Class options

3rd Wednesdays - **Prayer Meeting and Singing**

4th Wednesdays - **Bible Study**

Rock on Wednesday does not meet on 5th Wednesdays.

**Rock on Wednesday will not meet on November 23, 30
(see info on the Ball Brothers Concert!), December 21, 28.**

Want to help?

Contact David Nelson

(Discipleship Committee chair)
if you'd like to help with...

- Kitchen crew/clean-up
- Children's programming
- Fellowship Night programs



BENEFITTING LWCC WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Tapestry Tea Luncheon

HELD SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29TH

On October 29th ladies gathered for the Tapestry Tea luncheon. Focused attention was placed on God's word, servanthood and how to help the women in need within our community. Faith Treadway shared her testimony and the Care Center's transitional housing women's ministry team shared about how they are helping the women within our community. We heard the powerful testimony from one lady who has been helped through this ministry and how it led her to Christ.



The ladies that were in attendance helped create 200 blessing bags that were given to the Care Center. As these women seek assistance through the Care Center, they will be handed a blessing bag filled with items that will help with their physical and spiritual needs. May God be glorified through these efforts!





Missions & Outreach

BRIDGE EUROPE VISIT TEAM

Bridge: Europe Visit Team - Reporting after worship on November 13th. You and your small group are invited to join! ■



Music Ministry

DIETRICH BUXTEHUDE

From Vince Treadway

Dietrich Buxtehude (c1637-1707) was a German or Danish composer best known for his organ compositions and for his influence on Johann Sebastian Bach. He left a substantial body of sacred vocal music as well, but it is not as well known as his organ music.

He lived in Lubeck, Germany, and served several churches in that town, all of which were known as “Saint Mary’s.” His compositional style caught Bach’s attention because it introduced new ideas for organ music including recitative-like sections, more harmonic freedom, and the pedal solo, as well as a more improvisatory style.

No documents exist which verify Buxtehude’s birth date and nationality. The only document contemporary to him was at his death which recognized Denmark as his native country.

His duties in the churches he served included playing the main morning service and the afternoon service on Sundays and feast days, and for Vespers on the preceding afternoon. He was also responsible for preparing other musicians who served in the church. He reinstated the practice of giving afternoon concerts at church, which were called “Abendmusik.”

The documentary evidence for J. S. Bach’s famous trip to Lubeck to hear Buxtehude rests on the proceedings of the Arnstadt consistory of 21 February, 1706, where it is noted that Bach “has been to Lubeck in order to learn one thing or another about his (Buxtehude’s) art, and that he had requested a leave of

four weeks but stayed about four times as long.” Buxtehude’s influence on Bach’s organ works is quite evident following Bach’s return home, and Bach “took the ball and ran with it” by developing the ideas of Buxtehude and taking them much further in complexity and creativity.

Buxtehude’s works include sacred vocal, choral, secular vocal, organ, and instrumental works. Buxtehude’s influence on composers such as Bach helped launch a new era of music that led to what is known today as the “Classical” era.. ■

SAVE THE DATE

Ball Brothers Concert
Wednesday, November 30th at 7pm



Family Ministry

Opportunities abound for all ages to learn from God's Word!
Contact a pastor, elder, or a teacher for more information!

Children's Ministry

Children's Sunday School

"Living Together"

November Teachers

November 6th - Katie Lippert and Faith Treadway
November 13th - Katie Lippert and Michelle Hurst
November 20th - Angie Crews and Becky Steverson
November 27th - Michelle Hurst and Katie Lippert

YOUTH MINISTRY

Middle & High School

ROW Christmas Cookie Packing!

Wednesday, December 7

Christmas Parade Cookie Serving

Saturday, December 10,
Parade, 6pm-7pm
Set Up, 4pm

MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

November 1, Karen Allen
November 1, Jennifer Fugate
November 2, Jake Cockrell
November 4, Deeley Hunt
November 6, Susan Ebel
November 6, Larry Maxwell
November 8, Dayle Dierks
November 8, Ellie Lippert
November 8, Niven Owings
November 9, Madison Campbell
November 9, Pam Estes
November 12, Luciana Abele
November 13, Beau Cushing
November 13, Shelley Paros
November 14, Leah Gibson
November 18, Susan Coyne
November 18, Jane Terry
November 19, Jim Weaver
November 22, Loren Furland
November 22, Molly Ann Lewis
November 23, Jo Garrett
November 23, Susan Lamar
November 23, Shelley Underwood
November 29, Esther Rose Lippert
November 29, Jim Underwood
November 30, Cortland Kohl
November 30, Nancy Turnquist
November 30, Rebecca Youmans

ANNIVERSARIES

Angie & Scott Crews, November 10
Kaitlyn & Aaron Nelson, November 17
Penny & Rick Wright, November 17
Dawn & Rob McCollum, November 18
Adrian & Daniel Hunt, November 19
Janet & Rob Thullbery, November 20
Dottie & Dick Bailey, November 23

Church Family



Ball Brothers Concert
Wednesday, November 30th
at 7pm





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

CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

2022

Frank Hunt III
 John Matteson
 Vince Treadway

2024

Daniel Hunt
 David Nelson
 Andy Hunt

2023

Scott Crews
 Doug Pace
 David Falk

2025

Tony Woods

DEACONS

2022

Bea Meeker
 Aaron Nelson
 Laura Hunt

2024

Leah Gibson
 Dan Miller
 Randy Shear

2023

Susan Coyne
 Bob Hulen
 Michael Matteson
 Karla Campbell

Moderator: Rev. Mackay Smith
Clerk of Session: Frank Hunt III
Chairman of Deacons: Aaron Nelson
Deacon Secretary: Susan Coyne
Chm. of the Congregation: Jim Weaver
Treasurer: Michelle Hurst
Asst. Treasurer: Daniel Hunt