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Promises

by Rev. Ryan Jensen

I recently preached a sermon in which Herod made a foolish promise that resulted in John the Baptist's death. Herod demonstrates the folly in assuring anyone, "Ask from me whatever you wish, and I will give it." This promise is foolish for two reasons: 1. Even the elite of the powerful and wealthy can make no such promise when presented with the unlimited possibilities of "whatever you wish," and 2. Even if one had the means and resources to grant luxurious wishes, there are a number of ethical and moral issues involved with what should or should not be given. The death of another human being most certainly falls into this category. But what about smaller, less significant promises?

I was once the leader of a youth group that took annual trips to Monterrey, Mexico. The nature of those trips was mostly relational, as we traveled to such a distant place only to discover people with whom we had so much in common. We also worked on church construction projects, offered a Vacation Bible School for neighborhood children, and worked to clean and paint an orphanage. Each year it was amazing to witness how quickly relationships could be formed. And each year, promises were made:

I will write to you! I will send pictures of my family! I will return next year!

These kinds of promises were certainly made in love and in good faith, but most were offered in much the same way as Herod, without too much thought toward what would take place either in the immediate or distant future. Innocent in intent, but broken nevertheless. I count myself among the guilty.

It turns out that practical vows can often be very difficult to receive. Compared to "whatever you wish," it is a significant step down to offer, "Give to me a list of gifts that fit into the family budget and I will see what I can do." Similarly, it is not as

rewarding to hear, "I will write to you if I remember to fit my recollection of you into my busy day!"

Now, I suppose the question becomes, "Can even a practical vow be safe to keep?" To be honest, probably not. Looking toward the ideal and altruistic, I would like to think that every parent could realistically promise to love their children. Unfortunately, there are too many examples that support the contrary.

When it comes to promises, it would be best to leave these to God, who is the maker and keeper of all promises. God spoke of these promises (covenants) to Abraham, Noah and Moses. We also remember the words of institution that are spoken at the Lord's table:

This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink of it, do this in remembrance of me.

Perhaps this is the only promise with which to concern ourselves. Unlike the vows that we make and break, this one will never lead to disappointment or regret. Unlike the promise of Herod, this one will lead only to life.

Jesus also has the following to offer from the Sermon on the Mount:

Make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet...But let your statement be, "Yes, yes" or "No, no."

This instruction seems to point to a way of living in which close relationships negate the need for promises. This instruction also reminds us that promises point to what we *might* do in the future, whereas "yes" and "no" point to what we *will* do today. This will be helpful to remember when considering our response to our sense of God's love, as well as to our call of discipleship.

World Mission

Twitter Updates

Living Waters for the World, a ministry of our Living Waters Synod, (the South Alabama Presbytery is one of the 12 presbyteries served by the Living Waters Synod) is now using Twitter. Almost every day updates of Living Waters for the World (LWW) good news—successful water system installations, new partnerships, lives changed in so many ways by the gift of clean water—is available via Twitter.

If you would like to subscribe to LWW “tweets”- (Twitter is limited to 140 characters) visit www.twitter.com/LWW_LCWF to subscribe. “LCWF” stands for *let clean water flow*.

LWW’s mission is: *to serve as a resource to churches of all denominations, civic organizations and others in mission, enabling them to provide clean water to their partners in need.*

- They train and equip via Clean Water U (a five-day simulation school), with support from LWW's Fulfillment Center through which system/educational materials are available.
- Every effort is made to insure that operating partners (local, in-country partners) lead health, hygiene & spiritual education and construct the clean water system, and that initiating partners (typically U.S.-based partners) teach and supervise. A relationship for a minimum of three years is established, involving four or more trips.
- Curriculum structure is a modular format - trainers pick from a menu of choices that best meet their particular educational requirements.

Music & Fine Arts

Compact Discs (CDs) of the “*Rutter Requiem*” concert of May 17 and the “*Patriotic Concert*” of June 23 are available for sale. If you would like to purchase one, they are \$25 each. Please make your check payable to Nomad Productions.

To purchase a CD please make a note of which program you would like, attach your check to the note and place the note and check in the mailbox of Terry Maddox, Director of Music and Fine Arts Ministries, located in the GSPC office (by the copy machine.)

Christian Education

- **PYC Urban Mission Campers**—Rising 9th~12th grade PYC meet in the GSPC parking lot at 4 p.m. on July 18th. You will then head over the bay with Ryan and Laura Jensen. “What to bring” letters will go out this week.
- **PYC Sunday School Schedule:**
 July 19th- Ryan Jensen will be leading the lesson.
 July 26th- Ryan Jensen will be leading the lesson.
 Aug 2- Jade and Eddie Bishop will be teaching



Photos from the Richard Mighell Camp at Baytreat July 7-10

(thanks to Charlotte Naylor, photographer)



The Boys & Girls Club of South Alabama, Sonny Callahan Branch



IN OUR PRAYERS AT NURSING HOMES AND IN THE HOSPITAL

Allen Memorial: Mary Marvin Anderson

Gordon Oaks: Thyrsa Jones (room 162),
Harriet Norville (skilled care)

Cogburn (Dauphin Connector):

Winnie Counts
Betty Mechler

Westminster Village

Frankie Jernigan (room 539 skilled care)

Lectionary readings for July 19:

2 Sam. 7:1-14a, Ps. 89:20-37; Eph. 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Congregational Life

Fellowship Notes

Laura and Ryan Jensen will be **kayaking** out of the Five Rivers Delta Resource Center on the Causeway, Saturday, August 1. If you would like to join us, we will shove off at 7:00 a.m. to paddle north into the Delta. Kayaks and canoes are required! Kayaks can be rented at Five Rivers—call 626-8464 for prices and availability.

Ryan is also seeking volunteers who would like to host an evening meal for a new event: **“The Traveling Gumbo Pot.”** The concept is that I will bring the pot to your home and you fill it with your favorite recipe. (The large, seven gallon pot does not have to be used but must be present in keeping with the theme.) Hosts will also be asked to help in selecting the guest list, with preference given to those neighbors, GSPC members, family and friends who live closest to you. This will be a great way to share in each other’s company as well as to invite others to know more about the GSPC family.

To learn more about either event, please contact Ryan Jensen at 434-9329 or ryan@gspcmobile.org.

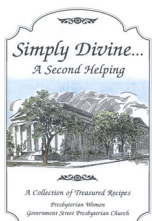
Out to Dinner Club

A newly formed “Out to Dinner Club” will meet for the first time on Saturday, July 25 at 6:00 p.m. at Bimini Bob’s, located at 29249 Highway 98, Daphne. Everyone is invited to come! Please contact Ryan Jensen at 251-434-9329 or ryan@gspcmobile.org to be included in the count if you would like to come. RSVP’s are desired, but not required

July 19 (Sunday) from 5-7:00 p.m., the Sanctuary and Bell Choirs will host a **welcome cook-out at Baytreat for the 7th Urban Mission Camp.** A group of 25 campers is expected from Black Mountain Presbyterian church in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Please contact M.R. Andrews at rudikazudi@aol.com if you would like to help.

Presbyterian Women

The Presbyterian Women’s Directory ~ if there are any **changes** for the directory please call the office, 432-1749, or email your changes to laura@gspcmobile.org. Changes must be received **by July 31.** Thank you.



Copies of **Simply Divine...A Second Helping** are available for purchase. It makes a wonderful gift for bridal showers and birthdays or just thinking of you days. The cookbooks are \$15 each. Please contact the church office to purchase your copy.

Christian sympathy is extended to the family and friends of **Mr. Jack Miller** who died on July 11. A memorial service and reception were held at GSPC on Tuesday, July 14.

Congratulations to Blair and Dietrich Schoenvogel on the birth of their first child, son **Charles McMillan Schoenvogel**, who was born on June 30. The proud grandparents are Fran and Joel Danley.

A Special Thank You

Dear GSPC Congregation,

I wanted the whole church to know what a wonderful member we have in Anita Winn.

After Hurricane Katrina, Tom spent the first year gutting the walls (of our house) and replacing half of the floors. The second year we had the house lifted up 6feet and the roof put on. In the third year the plumbing, electricity, walls, siding, trim and paint were done.

Anita Winn offered to donate her decorating skills and help with our newly rebuilt Katrina house. I was amazed with her prompt and heartfelt willingness to drive many times out to our home to help us. I thank her ever so much for the loving and cheerful blessing of her expertise. We appreciate her tender Christian gift in helping us get back into our home.

Thank you. Becky and Tom Root

New address for Dr. Camille R. Andrews
1720 Rocky Hollow Road
Germantown, Tennessee 38138-2336

*Honor your loved one with a Sunday Sanctuary
Flower arrangement. Contact Binky Oswald,
478-3087, to reserve a date.
August 9, 16, 23, and 30 are currently available.*

GREEN NEWSLETTER OPTION NOW AVAILABLE!

GSPC now offers an on-line version of this weekly newsletter. If you would prefer an e-mailed version instead of a paper copy, please e-mail:
laura@gspcmobile.org to make this change.

Urban Ministry

A special thanks to all of the leaders and helpers who made the Richard Mighell Camp at Baytreat such a rich experience last week for 24 campers from The Boys & Girls Club. Andy King led the camp which followed GSPC's VBS "Crocodile Dock" theme. Mrs. Alice Inge has been the generous supporter for this camp for many years, and this year the youth volunteers were joined by her grandson Joseph Richard Mighell Lyons, who taught the campers about basketball.

ADOPT-A-SCHOOL

In partnership with Mobile County Training School (MCTS), GSPC provides teaching materials, computers, printers, furniture, lawn equipment, hygiene kits, school supplies and uniform clothing to middle school students in support of their education.

Items needed for 2009-2010 school year:

School supplies	Book bags (clear or mesh)
Computers and printers	Office equipment
Any items that could be useful in a Middle School	

There is a donation box under the brochure rack outside the church office. To arrange pickup for large donations contact John Otts, 251-599-2311 or Julia Simmons, 251-343-0117.

Family Promise of Coastal Alabama

is celebrating six years of service to
homeless families with a

Summer Benefit Concert featuring
"Orphan Soul"

Saturday, July 25th, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

Dayspring Baptist Church
2200 Cody Road, Mobile, Alabama 36695

A love offering will be taken to benefit
homeless families with children

For more information call Family Promise
at 251-441-1991 or email

hmlfamilypromise@bellsouth.net

A disbelief in God does not result in a belief in nothing; disbelief in God usually results in a belief in anything.

author unknown