

Characteristics of Faith Presbyterian Church, No. 2

“The Expository Preaching of the Whole Bible”

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We are considering in this series some of those features that distinguish the life and testimony of Faith Presbyterian Church from other faithful churches, even Presbyterian Church in America congregations. The elders thought this time of transition a good time to consider what features of our life we think it important to preserve as we move into the next generation of the church’s life and work. Last time we considered *Reformed Catholicism*, a spiritual/theological posture defined by intelligent theological conviction maintained at one and the same time with a commitment to the unity of Christ’s church; that is the maintaining, defending, teaching, and adorning of a definite theological position – biblical inerrancy, Calvinistic theology, Presbyterian polity – while, at the same time, viewing ourselves and teaching our children to regard every lover of Jesus Christ, whatever his or her theology, a true brother or sister.

Tonight our subject is the preaching program of the church, *expository preaching with an emphasis on the consecutive exposition of books of the Bible*. For my text I have chosen three sentences, all three from Paul’s second letter to Timothy, and all addressed to Timothy in his role as a preacher/teacher of the Bible.

1. “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, *rightly handling the word of truth*.” 2 Tim. 2:15
2. “*All Scripture* is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” 3:16-17
3. “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. [It’s very interesting that he starts with reproof, rebuke and exhort; I don’t think I do enough rebuking myself.] For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” 4:1-4

Now virtually any minister is going to say that he is an expository preacher of the Bible. He says that because it is what ministers *are supposed to be*. But it is by no means always the case. To begin with, there are as many definitions of expository preaching as there are books on preaching or manuals of homiletics, if you prefer the technical term. But, more than that, the general term is a wax nose and can mean little more than that the subject of the sermon is found in the Bible and has something to do with the text that was read before the sermon. Fact is, by no means every preacher, even every Reformed and Presbyterian preacher, is an expositor of the Bible. We had a church planter in the presbytery years ago who was visited by his supervisor from the PCA’s *Mission to North America*. The supervisor attended the Sunday Service and after the service had

to remind the organizing pastor that in the PCA we expect that the Bible would be at least *mentioned* at some point in the sermon!

Some years ago a friend of mine did his Doctor of Ministry dissertation on the preaching of the Presbyterian Church in America. His findings were fascinating, if also disturbing. His sample was unusually large, some 200 men, each of whom was the pulpit minister in a PCA congregation. Almost half of the ministers surveyed said that on the Lord's Day morning they preached primarily on "topics." Only a fifth of the respondents preached consecutively through books of the Bible. But it was especially interesting to me that though most of the respondents indicated that they preached primarily topical sermons, 87% characterized themselves as "expository preachers" and only 6% as "topical preachers." Perhaps this betrays their misunderstanding of the term, but it is just as likely that it indicates that a conviction remains that the exposition of the Scripture *should be* the basis of Christian preaching even if, in fact, it no longer is in many cases. More interesting still was the fact that when asked "What factors influence your choice of preaching texts?" 30% chose "Issues that you perceive need to be addressed in the congregation" and 59% chose "The leading of the Holy Spirit." The problem with this should be obvious. There are many subjects of biblical teaching that are more difficult, less popular, or more challenging for the preacher. When a minister relies on "the leading of the Holy Spirit," experience suggests that the Holy Spirit is invariably going to lead him to topics he wants to preach, finds easier to preach, thinks his congregation will like him to preach, rather than topics he ought to preach because of their great significance in the Bible. For example, I fear that there are a good many PCA congregations who have heard countless sermons on God's grace to sinners but have never once heard a sermon on the judgment of their lives according to their works, no matter how often that subject appears in Holy Scripture. There are any number of subjects frequently encountered in Holy Scripture that virtually never appear in sermons!

What the survey also revealed was that the PCA has a shrinking canon, if attention in the pulpit is any measure of the authority of a book or a section of the Bible. For example, 100% of respondents had preached within the previous three years from the Gospel of John and from Paul. Only 11% had preached in the same period from the historical books of the OT and only 16% from the Minor Prophets (I wonder how much lower that percentage would be were the book of Jonah to be removed from consideration!). Less than a third had preached from the Major Prophets in that same three year period, slightly more than a quarter had preached from the Old Testament poets, less than a third had preached from Acts, but 96% had preached from the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Perhaps if I were introducing the Christian faith to a community that knew nothing about it, I too might concentrate on the Gospels and Paul, but as a recipe for preaching to a congregation of mostly Christian people, this choice of texts ensures that the congregation is getting only a part of biblical revelation.

Some of this concentration on certain parts of the Bible and ignoring of much of the rest of the Bible, this disproportionate emphasis on the New Testament and only parts of the New Testament, is likely due to the phenomenon of relatively short ministries. The average length of ministry in our PCA is only something around 5 years, or a little less. When a man arrives at a new charge where better to begin than in the Gospel of John or the Letter to the Ephesians; certainly not Hosea, 1 Kings, Ecclesiastes, or the Song of Songs! Still more it is also due to the disappearance of the evening service in our churches. If one has only the morning sermon, just 52 sermons in a year, minus Sundays for vacations, for guest ministers, and for an associate or assistant pastor's

preaching, one is unlikely to devote time and attention to Judges, Chronicles, or Ezekiel. Fact is, even Presbyterian people are nowadays hearing much less preaching than they used to. But, you see, if you don't preach the prophets or the OT histories, the strong, masculine note of divine judgment, so prominent in those parts of the Bible, is inevitably muted. Little preaching is done on Revelation any longer – it has been discredited in some large part by the fanciful expositions of the previous several generations – or on Numbers, but both books ring the changes on the absolute necessity of God's people being faithful and proving by obedience their loyalty to God and to Christ. The powerful emphasis on the necessity of an obedient life is a unique perspective of both those books of the Bible.

Now, before I say anything more, some *caveats*. I am far from saying that all valuable preaching is expository preaching. I was taught years ago in my seminary training that there were three kinds of sermons and all could be both biblical and valuable in their own way: subject sermons, textual sermons, and expository sermons. And, to be honest, my concept of an expository sermon is not precisely the one that I was taught in seminary. What I mean by expository sermon is simply that the sermon not only *intends* to explain and apply the teaching of the passage that was read but does so in a way that takes seriously what the biblical passage actually says, what it is about, and what it is intended to teach us. That is, not only is the text the sermon's point of departure, the sermon is about the material contained in the text itself. But I have certainly preached subject sermons that take a biblical statement as a point of departure but which are not tied too closely to the text that was read.

Some extraordinary preachers were subject preachers or textual preachers. By textual preacher I mean someone whose sermon was on a point raised in some biblical statement – the subject of the sermon is a biblical statement – but the exposition neither explores the statement in its context nor depends upon details in the text itself. Charles Spurgeon, perhaps the greatest preacher of the 19th century, if greatness is measured by influence, was such a preacher. Spurgeon didn't preach through books of the Bible. His sermon texts were chosen, it would often appear, at random, or were called forth by events. He was more of a textual preacher than a subject preacher however. The sermon interacted with the biblical text at least to some degree. Billy Graham, on the other hand, would be a fine example of a subject preacher. If you have ever heard Dr. Graham, as I have many times, you learn not to expect a lengthy explanation of what is going on in any biblical passage and, actually, comparatively little attention will be paid to the text that was read. What you get is instead an address on a biblical subject. Some of that, of course, is due to the fact that Dr. Graham's preaching was almost always evangelistic in purpose. He wasn't expounding the Bible to a congregation week after week, but calling for a decision to put one's faith in Jesus Christ.

Another preacher whose sermon style could be described as either subject or textual preaching was Alexander Whyte. You know how much I admire Whyte as a preacher! But he never expounded a text in his life; few of his contemporaries did either. It was not a time for expository preaching. So please don't hear me saying that the exposition of the Bible, the careful explanation and thoughtful application of paragraphs of Holy Scripture is the only way to preach the Word of God. I've preached long series of sermons on biblical subjects (for example, several different series of sermon on the incarnation during Advent seasons, on the suffering of the Lord during Lent, a series on prayer, a series on affliction, a series on eschatology, and so on; for that matter, this series is another example of a series of subject sermons). I've preached a good number of textual sermons

as well, often called forth by events or occasions or perceived needs. I tend to preach subject or textual sermons on both Christmas Sunday and Easter.

Still, I have no hesitation in saying that very likely the only way a congregation of God's people is going to get *the Word of God with its own emphases and in its own proportion* is to have much of the preaching it receives be the consecutive exposition of books of the Bible. Certainly many, if not most of the great exemplars of Christian preaching have made much of this approach in their own preaching. The greatest of the early Christian preachers, John Chrysostom, first of Antioch and then of Constantinople, regularly preached through books of the Bible, especially the books of the New Testament. Much of Augustine's preaching was of the same kind. John Calvin was supremely an expository preacher of this type, preaching through books of the Bible, both OT and NT, in both his daily morning sermons and his Lord's Day sermons at St. Peter's in Geneva. Many of the Puritan preachers followed his example. And in the 20th century Martyn Lloyd Jones recovered for a new generation of preachers the method of consecutive exposition, famously spending some twenty years preaching his way through Paul's Letter to the Romans on Friday nights at Westminster Chapel, or on Sundays preaching some 60 sermons on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount and 230 sermons on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians!

At the time Lloyd-Jones preached those sermons he was virtually alone in adopting that method, but, great preacher that he was, he recovered that method for a new generation of preachers. I consider myself one who learned the art of consecutive exposition in some large part from Lloyd-Jones and from William Still, my pastor in Aberdeen for three years, whose virtually invariable method was to preach through books of the Bible. I pride myself on being more disciplined than either of those men. Mr. Still might well read and expound, in a single Sunday evening sermon, thirteen chapters of Jeremiah, preaching what you and I would think were three or even four separate sermons along the way. It didn't bother him at all if the evening service lasted two and a half hours! And, as for Lloyd-Jones, a friend once told me that that an older acquaintance of his had happened to visit Westminster Chapel one Sunday morning when the great preacher's sermon was on Ephesians 6:11 – he was in the midst of his famous Ephesians sermons, later published in six volumes, and he had reached Ephesians 6:11 – Paul's warning not to be taken in by the "wiles" (the ESV has "schemes") of the Devil. Some months later he was back at Westminster on a Sunday morning and discovered that the Doctor, still in Ephesians 6:11, was addressing the Devil's 18th wile! In other words, he had interrupted his exposition for a long series of subject sermons.

As you know very well, the preaching program here has been dominated by the consecutive exposition of books of the Bible. As I said, it has not been so exclusively, but certainly far more often than not. Over the past nearly forty years I have preached through virtually all of the Bible and much of it more than once. I have never preached paragraph by paragraph through Isaiah or Jeremiah, though I have preached through parts of both books. I have preached right through Ezekiel. I haven't preached through Zephaniah or Nahum but those are the only other books not so far expounded in a sermon series here. We've been through each of the Gospels twice, Acts twice, all of Paul's letters at least once and most of them twice, and all the rest of the New Testament at least once. We are making our way through Genesis for the second time. We've been through the rest of the Pentateuch, all the histories – Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, Joshua and Judges before that – the wisdom literature, perhaps a third of the 150 psalms, and, as I said, much of the prophets.

Let me tell you, as an aside, how tremendous an experience this has been for me personally. I know the Bible so much better than I otherwise would know it – even as a preacher – and love it so much more because I have, as it were “crept through the Bible,” taking it paragraph by paragraph, book by book. The Bible wonderfully rewards careful study and one of the principle rewards of my life has been my growing acquaintance with the Word of God. And may I commend you for this as well. Had you been unwilling to return for a second service and a second sermon on the Lord’s Day, I shudder to think how much less we both would know of the Word of God. Let me say it again: if you have but one sermon on Sunday it is highly unlikely that you will ever hear 2 Chronicles preached! But there is tremendously important and fabulously interesting revelation in 2 Chronicles!

Now, let me explain more specifically why I think it so important to continue this method of preaching – the consecutive exposition of the whole Bible – and all the more in our day; not, of course, exclusively, but as a significant portion of the preaching from this pulpit.

1. *First*, the Bible is the Word of God. As Paul puts it in 2 Tim. 3:16, God breathed it out or God spoke it. We know that. We believe that. But what that means, of course, is that it was God who put everything in the Bible that it contains, every book, every genre – the laws, the histories, the hymns, the wisdom material, the prophecies, the Gospels, the letters, the apocalypses – *God himself* gave us all of that material. Surely no Christian is going to say that some of that material that God gave us is unimportant or that we can skip it and just concentrate on a few parts of the Bible. No Christian is going to say that we know better than God what is really important for us to know. Everyone is going to say, of course, that we should study *all* of the Bible. But it is by preaching – both according to the Bible and in the experience of the church – that the teaching of the Bible is most powerfully written on the heart. So by what principle can we justify preaching only some parts of the Bible, usually only a small fraction of the Bible, and preaching on those parts over and over and over again while ignoring the rest?

And the more one thinks about this, the more obvious it becomes that everything God put in his Word is essential instruction for us. We need the law of God both to convict us of our sin and to teach us how to live. We need the wisdom literature to make our way through this world, with all of its temptations and problems, with our faith and character intact. We need the prophets to encourage us and to rebuke us. We need the Gospels and the letters. What part of this entire revelation would anyone say we can safely do without? It was the Lord Jesus who, *quoting Deuteronomy*, said:

“Man shall not live by bread alone; but *by every word* that comes from the mouth of God.” [Matt. 4:4] Jesus lived his perfect life with the help of Deuteronomy! Is any one of us ready to say that we can manage without Deuteronomy?

And, then, in his Sermon on the Mount, “For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” [Matt. 5:18] Why? Because God’s people need that law, all of it.

And, then, in his great commission: “teaching them to observe *all* that I have commanded you.” [Matt. 28:20]

But, more than that, each part of the Bible has its own peculiar *power* and *influence*. This is one of the things I have discovered in preaching through the Bible. The parts of the Bible are very different from one another and they commend themselves to an interested Christian mind and heart for very different reasons. No one is going to take to heart the reality of divine judgment and the ferocity of that judgment who does not read the histories and the prophets. It is there that we learn what a catastrophe it is when a rebellious people or person falls into the hands of the living God. The impressive repetition of this theme in the historical and prophetic literature makes that part of the Bible immensely important in a feckless, sentimental, and self-excusing day such as our own. We need the Bible, all of it, which is why God gave it all to us. We need the sound of divine judgment ringing in our ears, but we also need practical help in learning how to love a husband or a wife, or to raise our children, and so many other subjects as well. To preach just some of it and certain parts over and over again is, among other things I think, to pretend to be wiser than God.

2. *Second*, I want you to know the Bible. I want the Bible to be a familiar book to you. I want you to absorb it and imbibe it until it is true of you what they said of John Bunyan, that he was *bibline*. Prick him anywhere and he bled the Bible! I want you to think about everything in a biblically informed way; to respond to events in a biblically sophisticated way; and to be able to bring the Word of God to bear on anything happening in your life.

May I say that this is why I make sometimes extensive comment on the sermon text as I read it. I know a lot of preachers don't do that, and they have reasons for doing it as they do, but I want you along the way to master the Bible. I want you to understand the Bible, I want you to know how reliable its history is. I want you to become intelligent readers of the Bible, able to appreciate its ancient near eastern literary character, its figurative expressions, powerful and beautiful as they are but so unlike those we would use today. And I want you to see the extraordinary inter-connectedness of biblical revelation, how it is that we get the same theology in Genesis that we get in Samuel, Isaiah, the Gospel of Luke, or the letters of Paul. The Bible speaks to the heart with ever greater authority when it is understood and when its literary forms are appreciated at a deeper level.

Not that I ever was confronted with the opportunity, but one reason I would be unlikely ever to take a pastorate in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is that I would be forbidden to do what I do most ever Sunday in making comments on the text as I read it. In the OPC's *Book of Church Order*, in the "Directory of Worship," we find this:

"God speaks directly to the congregation in his own words. For this reason, the reader should refrain from interspersing the reading of God's Word with human comments."

I suppose I understand the reason for that deliverance, though it seems to me virtually a contradiction of what we are told Ezra and the Levites did as they read the Word of God to the people in Neh. 8:7-8. But the result of making no such comments on the text as it is read must be – since the sort of comments I make would clutter up the sermon if they had to be included in the sermon, so they would be left out altogether – I say, the result must be that the congregation learns much less about the biblical text than otherwise it would. The fact is, what any congregation knows about the Bible will in largest part be what it learns in church. And I want you all to know the Bible very well. We are learning a lot of new things about the Bible, especially about the Old Testament, in our time. I want you to have the benefit of that learning. I

find it exciting and immensely encouraging to be read with this new perspective that has been brought by the literary interpreters of the Word of God. I hope you do as well.

3. *Third*, the Scripture itself says that everything in the Bible – “all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable...” – is valuable for the Christian’s faith and life. Paul didn’t say that “most of the Bible is useful for training in righteousness” or that “certain parts of the Bible” are especially useful for teaching or reproof or correction. He said that *all of it* is. And, perhaps more important still for our present situation, the part of the Bible that Paul was talking about in 2 Tim. 3:16 is the part we today call the Old Testament! By far the greatest part of PCA preaching (and this is probably less true of PCA preaching than most American evangelical preaching) is from the NT. Huge tracts of the OT, by far the largest part of the Bible, are never preached.

We are not here at Faith, and do not wish to be, “New Testament Christians,” as many believers will call themselves today. We are and intend to be “Whole Bible Christians” as we are taught to be in the New Testament itself. As Paul himself put it to some Christians in the new epoch, “...whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that though endurance and through *the encouragement of the Scriptures* we might have hope.” [Rom. 15:4] He was talking about the Old Testament, the first 36 books of the Bible. Throughout the NT texts from the OT are cited, not as truth that once was important, not truth that has been altered in some fundamental way, not as mere background to the newer revelation, but as the living Word of God to be believed and obeyed. Whether it is the law or the gospel, prophecy or wisdom, the NT treats the OT as simply the Word of God. I can tell you this, no writer of the NT ever thought, never imagined, that some Bible publisher would put a blank page between Malachi and Matthew, as if to suggest that in moving from the first 36 books of the Bible to the last 27 we were moving from one spiritual world to another, from one message to another, from one truth to another.

To be sure, we are, of course, going to spend a great deal of time in the New Testament as the last and most comprehensive revelation of Jesus Christ and our life in him. But it is in the New Testament that we are taught that Jesus is no one other than the Yahweh who delivered his people from bondage in Egypt, who gave the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai, who created all things and revealed himself to Israel as savior and lord. And, more important still, there are major subjects of biblical teaching that are not found in the NT, or are found only incidentally in the NT, because they are so comprehensively represented in the OT. One obvious example of this would be the prayers and hymns of the Psalter. There is no NT psalter and so much less in the NT about how to pray and how to sing praise to God. Another example of what we are given in the OT but not the New would be the extensive biographies and histories, so much more detailed than anything we find in the New. All of that flesh and blood is fundamental to a real understanding of the life of faith, the ups and downs of Christian experience, the stages of Christian discipleship, and so on. There is only a smattering of the teaching of wisdom in the NT (principally in James), no Proverbs, or Ecclesiastes, or Song of Songs; no book of Job. And I could go on and on. Huge portions of the teaching with which we are to form our worldview are found in the OT. Anyone unfamiliar with the early chapters of Genesis, with the oracles of judgment found in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, or with the prophecies of consummation found in those same prophets can hardly expect to *think about the world and life in the world* as a

Christian should. But if those passages – if they are fundamental to a Christian understanding – are so important they obviously must be preached.

4. *Fourth*, while I realize that I am again making broadly the same point, it is important to add that preaching the Bible in its own proportion, its own order and its own emphasis, which is to say, preaching the Bible *as the Bible reads*, is an important protection against one-sidedness in Christian thought and life. That is, such preaching inoculates us against the influence of theological and homiletical fads, of which there are a number that have come and gone in the modern era and some which are still with us today, as well as against the temptations of our particular age. A concentration on grace – a popular principle of preaching in some quarters of our church, is often taken to mean that every sermon, whatever the text, must expound that theme. One result of that view of preaching is that very few such preachers would ever preach a sermon like the Sermon on the Mount because it doesn't include what most would think a proper gospel message. It is law and duty and demand and warning from beginning to end. Nothing of the cross, nothing of faith as the principle of Christian living and so on. But, of course, when they preach the Sermon on the Mount and bring in those thoughts from elsewhere, they mute the message of the sermon as Jesus himself preached it. There is no longer the unqualified demand, the unrelentingly solemn warning that we find in that sermon. I have never myself thought it something to which I should aspire, viz. to be a better, wiser preacher than Jesus Christ!

I could say a similar thing about redemptive-historical preaching, the approach to preaching that sees the object of every sermon – no matter the text – to be the explanation of how the text points to Jesus Christ as our redeemer from sin and death. At its best, this preaching can be very fine, but it is subject – as anyone who has listened to those sermons will tell you – to the temptation to ignore what the Bible is actually saying to make the text fit the controlling paradigm. The antidote to views of preaching that require a certain message or theme to dominate a pulpit – views that tempt the preacher, I would say inevitably, to prefer some biblical subjects to others and to mute the Bible's witness to subjects that don't comport well with that favored message – is simply to preach the Bible, paragraph by paragraph and concentrate on the message of that particular text, whatever it might be. One of the greatest Christian preachers, Charles Simeon, made this a touchstone of his preaching.

“I love the simplicity of the Scriptures; and I wish to receive and inculcate every truth precisely in the way, and to the extent, that it is set forth in the inspired volume... I have a great jealousy on this head; never to speak more or less than I believe to be the mind of the Spirit *in the passage I am expounding*... I would run after nothing and shun nothing... the truth is not in the middle, and not in one extreme, but in both extremes.” [Emphasis mine]

I think that exactly right and the only safe way to ensure that God's people get the entire Bible and all of its teaching instead of that part of its teaching that the minister prefers, the congregation prefers, or that is amenable to the paradigm the preacher was taught at seminary.

5. *Fifth*, Holy Scripture is spiritually formative and so it is important that all of the Scripture be exercising its influence. We do not want to be faithful fools, so wisdom is important. We don't want to be people who rejoice in God's forgiveness but are only little interested in keeping God's commandments, so the law is important. We do not wish to be enamored of Christ's priesthood at

the expense of his lordship, or a Christian worldview at the expense of personal devotion to the Lord, or the implications of Christian faith for society at the expense of the Bible's teaching about the importance of the Christian family, and so on. And we are all subject to the tendency to glom on to one subject and ignore another. And the only way to ensure that all of this actually shows up in the church's pulpit is to let the Bible, the whole Bible, speak for itself, or, better, to let the Lord speak through his Word about everything *he thinks* is important for us to know, to believe, and to feel. I want you to be so well instructed in the whole Bible that you will understand how any particular biblical theme or emphasis fits into the larger whole without having to be told in every sermon!

Now, to be sure, a boring or inept sermon on a biblical text can confuse a congregation or put it to sleep no matter the subject of the text. That the sermon be clear, persuasive, and interesting is the preacher's task and some will be better than others and, to be sure, on some Sundays any preacher will be better than on others. The preacher's calling is to make interesting and inspiring sermons that are faithful to the Word of God, and that will be our wisdom as a congregation, to find such a preacher. Still, if the Word of God is before the congregation, all parts of it, Sunday after Sunday for months and years on end, the blessing of knowing the mind and will of God as he has revealed them to us will be ours to a greater degree than if we heard only riveting sermons every Sunday but all of them on just one, or at the most a few of the Bible's subjects. We want to be formed and shaped by the Bible, all of it as God gave it to us.

6. *Sixth*, and finally, the Bible is an endlessly fascinating book. Every part and parcel of it is a treasure-trove of the most interesting, inspiring, valuable, and intriguing instruction. I've learned this as I've studied the Bible over these past 40 years in order to preach it to you. We miss much if we confine ourselves, or if the preacher confines himself to only some parts of the Bible. We've been discovering again how fascinating the Genesis narratives are and how much they have to teach us about many things. Pity the believers who never hear them preached. And the same could be said for Deuteronomy! I once found a Thanksgiving card – I don't usually send cards at Thanksgiving, but this one was too good to pass up – I found it in a Canadian greeting card shop. And once I read it I knew I had to buy it and send it to my sister. On the front of card was a caricature of the colonial Pilgrim and the words: "Thanksgiving, the day when we give thanks that we don't have to eat corn mush, wear buckles on our shoes, or," then one opens the card to read on the inside, "explain the book of Deuteronomy to an Indian." I was surprised someone at the greeting card company knew enough about the Bible to know how funny that was! But, in fact, that book, sometimes called the "Romans of the Old Testament," is so rich with human interest and with a distinctly Christian understanding of life, that it would be a pleasure to explain it to an Indian. It would transform his or her thinking and living. Indeed, it would be a poor preacher who could not make Deuteronomy a life-changing discovery for an American Indian who had lived his life in bondage to animism. And, frankly, if the early colonists had obeyed Deuteronomy more than they did the story of their interaction with the Indian population would be a much happier one than it was.

I remember reading Professor John Frame recollect, who heard many sermons in the chapel of the seminary he taught at for twenty years, that one impression of redemptive-historical preaching – which was the paradigm taught seminarians at that institution – was that it was boring. [<http://framepoythress.org/ethics-preaching-and-biblical-theology>, No. 6; *The Escondido* Theology, 50] The fascinating variety of the Bible was collapsed into a dulling sameness, as every text ended up

teaching the same lesson. We know that isn't right. We know that isn't true of the texts of the Bible. They say a thousand things and every one of them precious, valuable, important, scintillating if only properly understood.

So it is that we intend that it should be a characteristic of the pulpit of Faith Presbyterian Church that it proclaims, with serious attention to the actual text of the Bible, the whole of the Bible's teaching and that accordingly a characteristic of the congregation here that it knows, loves, believes, and obeys *all the Bible*, from Genesis to Revelation.