

200th Anniversary Conference
"Q&A Session with Dr. Willborn"

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Well, good morning. Everybody looks chipper. Do you know what chipper means? It means wide awake and ready to go okay now you know, right? Okay. I have a. As they say in Alabama. I have a castle of questions here. And so let me get to them one pertain is not to the last two days, but to the sermon that's.

Sermon this sermon that's coming up. I was right the first time then I I never you know, once you mark that multiple toys answer don't go back just. Okay, but it's about the sermon why in verse 3 of second Samuel 9 now this this tells me that someone listened yesterday that we should be doing our preparation for the Lord's day and for the worship and how that our household always reads the text that's going to be preached the next day so that's good why in verse 3 of second seminar does David ask for someone of the house of Saul instead of the house of Jonathan since that's who he made the covenant with.

Since he made the covenant with Jonathan. That's a good question now. I'm going to tell you real quickly and I don't have a lot of time and I'm these questions won't take a lot of time thankfully but. You know, you always heard there there are no dumb questions, there are no stupid questions.

I'm I'm gonna say there are. Having taught for several years now and there are some stupid questions. That's not one of them though, okay? The short answer is the covenant. Why does he refer to Saul instead of Johnathan since he and Jonathan were buds and they made this covenant together?

And the answer is because it was if it was it was a covenant. And God's covenant with his people existed through their teens and King Saul. And so Saul was the dad and often you know, when you look at the the genealogies in the Bible. You can go the Old Testament go to the New Testament genealogies and the gospel counts and you you read down those genealogies in your life, whoa, wait a minute.

We got you know, he was his grandfather or great friend father. They often skip but the references it's to show you the continuity of the covenant and the covenanted relationship and that's the short answer to the question is because ultimately it was about salt and if you if

you in that text as we read it again this morning pay attention, what does what does Mephibosheth get from David?

He doesn't get what was David's he gets every thing that was solved. Because Saul is the one that owned it all. He was the one that was it was granted to by covenant from God to give him all of this and so that's the answer to that but a good question.

Okay in the intro, this would go back to Friday night when I did that splash about the Reformation being a Renaissance and bringing back to life rediscovering the doctrines, this is not new Presbyterianism didn't start in the 16th century. It was, Rediscovered on earth from the scripture. By these men.

The question is you spoke of Calvin Knox and Melville, why did you not speak of Luther didn't he have any input? And the answer is simply this and I I should have been more clear on this. That you have you have three different lines. Basically three different lines of Reformation that grow out of the the larger.

Protestant Reformation. You have the Anabaptist line. You have the Lutheran line and you have the what we call the Reformed line or the Calvinian line. And since we're Presbyterians we're in the Reformed line. Now this morning in the sermon. I'm. An image in Luther because. Chapter 9 deals with one of the doctrines that was at the center of his concerns and that's the doctrine of justification.

But since so much of what I was asked to talk about and I did talk about was worship. Luther really didn't reform worship. He didn't have a real big it was this says he didn't have significant input into reforming worship. And so he left a lot of the Romish.

Hmm. In the worship and and the Lutherans inherited that and many still today of the more confessional Luther. Sacraments all seem more. Romish than reform. The Presbyterian line followed Calvin through Knox and Melville. And so, that's why I focused primarily on them on Friday night. For whoever asked. Does that help?

If not you can say not really. If it did then you don't have to acknowledge that you ask the question. Although it wasn't done. In regards to in regards to the pictures or statues of Jesus, what about pictures of Jesus and and events? Is that creating a grieving image or is it just for showing or illustrating an event?

Do you think these there's two questions but I'll I'll take them together because they this together do you think these images are statues wrong altogether or just having them in church? During your worship is wrong. All right. I want to give you my position, which is the Westminster position.

And this is often it's also Calvin's position. This is one of those places where. There's not extinction here. It's also the clearly the

the patristics the early church fathers position. They wrote clearly on this issue.

I would say. That what we have in the Bible concerning our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient. That anything added to that. Is a violation of the second command of making graven images. Now if the question that followed there was is well is that just true, you know, we know we don't want them in the church building.

Well, here's the thing, our confession also says that we're to make no graven or mental images. Now, that's the one that people stumble over. I'm on the only examination committee for our presbytery. I've served in other Presbyteries through my years on this in the same capacity and you'll have people come in and say no we shouldn't make.

Any. Images, you know picture statues carvings that sort of thing but there's no way to keep it keep it out of our mind. And I would suggest to you that the reason we can't keep it out of our mind is because we violated. The graven image. Command. And so we've all seen them right we've seen the white ones the black ones the yellow ones the pink ones the now the rainbow Jesus we've.

You know, we've seen the Jesus. We've seen them all and so it creeps in it's interesting. Paul in second. Corinthians five says that we used to think of Jesus in bodily form, but we no longer know him that way. That's a remarkable statement. Paul makes. Now philosophically, there's an argument against this too because.

All we can do is make a representative image of Jesus. People say well, you know, that mental image things impossible the apostles couldn't have got his image out of their mind. You're right.

But that was the exact image that you portrayed. In philosophy we call that a presentative image and what the same commandment for bids is representative images represented images. That that don't that don't represent Jesus. But my position ultimately is and that of Westminster Calvin and multitude is that for us to say, you know, but we need to seek pictures it helps to see pictures.

At that point I have to ask do you really believe the Bible is sufficient? This was at the heart of Luther's reformation even though he didn't always apply it properly but it was at the heart of Luther's reformation that is sola scriptura and when he said sola scriptura what the reform from that point forward, what all their fathers meant was that we believe it's absolutely authoritative.

We believe it's absolutely clear. We believe it is absolutely sufficient. And when we add images and say yeah, but we need seniors saying the Bible is not sufficient. And I believe it is now here just put it in here and that's a little second thing.

At no point in the Bible. Do any of the apostles attempt to describe Jesus human appearance.

Now people say well the book of Revelation OK OK. So we're going to have Jesus in our head and in a picture with a sword sticking out of his mouth. Do you think he walked around? Galilee with a sword sticking out of his mouth? I know that sounds a little frivolous but.

That's where people have to go with this is the Bible does have an image of Jesus and he has a sword to get out of his mouth. But that's it. That's an imagery just tell us. The word is the sword the two-edged sword that sharper and divides between marrow and bone.

It's not meant to be taken and put in a picture. Often wonder, you know, humanly speaking wouldn't it be terribly sad?

That you died. And you're ushered into heaven. And they say behold the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world and you say, um. He didn't look on my Jesus. I've never seen a picture like that. And you know all John said when he saw him in heaven in Revelation 5 was.

As the lamb slain.

So, The answer is yes. I do think we do not need them and any that are made misrepresent my Jesus and that means it's not the true. Jesus and therefore, it can't be the true gospel. Recently. I've heard someone say that on the Lord's Day rests just meant resting that we could watch a film on the Lord's Day, why is that wrong?

Resting is not wrong, but I know the question is watching a film when our children were little. We would often on Sunday afternoon. Pile up on the sofa and we had a series of moody science video films about. The woodpecker and all these fantastic things God created and we would watch those.

We had some Patricia Sinjin we we say here in the safe Saint John but I really strings would say Sinjin and she was an author of British author English author and she was a missionary and she wrote several books and then they returned into films about about Christian themes.

We used those and talked about lessons of those for our children. It. That's what you're talking about. Now if you're just saying, you know, I just need that sermon was so heady. I need just some mindless laughter. So, I'm gonna watch. I don't know what you watch for that.

I would go get the apple dumpling game. Then you're taking yourself away from the the point of the word stay and you're distracting yourself from the things of God and the message of the Scripture. Hopefully that helps. What are your opinions on instruments and worship?

S.They.

're.Uther.Kept the instruments.

Calvin.Was again it.And believed that the human voice was the instrument of God.That and he would have based that on the fact that in the New Testament we have no instruction concerning instrumentation, but we do have instruction to sing and to speak to one another in song in Psalms for your hands and spiritual songs.

Presbyterians.Following that lead through Scotland into the United States were generally non-instrumental users up until about the mid 19th century.And that's when you start seeing a good deal of ink spilled about this Presbyterian Church or that Presbyterian Church bringing an organ into worship.And you had people leaving churches over it.

Now those who brought instruments particularly organs into the worship in Presbyterianism largely argued for it not only grounds that the Old Testament Psalms talks about organs and hearts and things. That was never the argument.Because they understood that those instruments.Of the Old Testament were used typologically and pointed forward to the joy the full joy the fullness of worship in the Holy Spirit.

That's an argument that John Gerardo made.

Exhaustively and exhaustingly in some cases in his the use of instrumental music's in public worship volume in the that it was published in the 19th century.A lot of our reformed cousins still use no instrumental music. I remember going to one of our general sims as BCA in Colorado.

Springs some true 1987 and a group of us went to the RPCNA church to worship that morning.And I want to tell you.

It ain't just a church of Christ's thing.And when those those 75 people saying,You realize you you don't need an organ or a piano or anything else this is this is the best singing I've ever heard when I would go to primitive Baptist churches with my dad when I was little and they didn't have instrumentation and I would always say why do they sing better than we do?

And I'll say this.We we left the organ behind at Covenant in Oak.Ridge several years ago.Went to a piano and our singing improved instantaneously.

A and I had an organs organist explain this and by the way one of the best arguments against an organ in public worship is by a an organist and a theologian and philosopher by the name of Nicholas vulture's daughter who's part of the reformed pistonology movement at Notre Dame without implantica and Paul Helm who's not in Notre Dame but that

whole group that's a beside the point but to tell you that there's a note.

Dumb person just doesn't like instruments, he's a world-class organist in addition to being a world-class philosopher in theologian and I remember coming across this article a few years ago and he was just saying, you know, any also includes choirs because he says, you know the scriptures instruct us all to sing.

And we're not to be sung at we're not to be entertained we're to we're to be part of the congregational singing and he argues an argument I've used that one of the best ways that people with gifted voices can lead a congregation and help assist those of us who can't carry each human quite as easily and quite as well is by having them spattered out all over the congregation so everyone can hear them.

Consider them being lost up there back there someplace so my personal position is. That. The position that was taken by those who brought organs in although I don't think organs are the best instrument because they're so overpowered. There is just not much way. Every organised I know and I have some friends they'll say.

I I love the organ you know, why because it's powerful. I'm imitating one of my organist friends right now. And he says because I can just make it feel this building. But the scriptures don't command us to fill the building with anything but our voices. Pianos guitars. T David Gordon has written a wonderful little book called Hawaii.

Fly Johnny I was trying to think Jimmy Billy Johnny quite Johnny can't sing. And he talks about largely the kind of songs we sing. Too often and the kind of instrumentation that's used and even gets into that with the limitations of a guitar over a piano as far as caring tunes and and supporting singing.

I would encourage that's a very good book about on on the general use of instruments. The historic position and defense of instruments in worship is this that it's not a command of God. But it's it's also but it is a a circumstance of worship much like lighting or a building or a pulpit for a pastor to rest his Bible upon that it's a circumstance and that as a circumstance it supports and promotes and and launches the singing.

But it shouldn't be obvious.

Now for musicians. You can understand that one of the best pianist ever heard play for congregational singing and you know, you've heard really good pianists who couldn't play for singing.

We had two Juilliard trained penis in our church in Birmingham many years ago, one of them was a pianist and one was an accompanist. And she just faded into the wall. And yet she she kept the the melody she

kept the tempo she kept everything so we could sing we didn't drag we didn't lose our breath and she was also a vocal teacher.

She had trained two or three miss Alabama's. So she knew what music how it needed to be played for you seen with it. Where's the other one was brand and wonderful and? And have time you couldn't and other times you're like, oh this is a dirt and it's praise God from whom all blessings flow and that's one of my pet peeves.

Singing. Seeing the dotsology to a dirt, you know, pick it up a little bit. I'm just saying if we're gonna sing it in there today pick the tempo up just a little bit please. We're not at a funeral. Now some of the songs are meant to be gorgeous. And we don't need to put carnival tunes to those okay?

You know, we don't dash children's heads against the stones to you know, let's go to the fair, you know, that's you don't do that, so that's my that's my position it's a circumstance.

And so our company is should be really good and able to accompany and not distract okay, that's the longest dancers specifically how should we pray this is a good question how should we pray should it be complicated detailed simply? I wrote a little article. In table talk magazine two years ago.

How long should we pray? That was the they assigned those that you know, I don't get to pick what I'm gonna write they always say, hey we got something in mind for you and I'm like, okie dokie and the the the whole table taught that month whenever it was was about prayer.

And as a means of grace and so mine was how long should we pray and I addressed this and the answer to is we should pray until we die. A lot of the prayers in the Bible are very short. Most of the prayers are Lord. Outside of the the Lord's prayer in John 17, which still even if you read that out loud and put yourself on a timer it is not very long.

So prayers don't have to be long. And they certainly shouldn't be complicated. I think a lot of children grew up in churches hearing, oh father thou art and and on and on and they don't know what half the words are and if you read the model prayer that Jesus gives in Matthew.

It's very simple and that should be how we pray. Doesn't have to be those exact words, but if those are the topics we're to cover and those are those are Jesus's words were always simple he was not very complicated in his in his use of vocab. What's the history of the offertory in worship?

It's not been around very long. Offering has not been around very long your pastor and I were just talking about that earlier if you're looking to Westminster confession chapter 21 offering is not an

element prescribed in there, if you travel around the world much and you go into churches you will often find them not having an offering during the worship service, but there'll be a note in there someplace there may be announcement before the call of the worship that.

And we do this at covenant on Sunday nights.

There's an announcement made and it's in the bulletin right at the bottom after the addition please remember the offering plate is in the North X for the deacon's special needs. And so people pass out by it and put your checks and their cash in kiddos put their opinions and nickels and dimes and quarters in and you'll find a lot of churches around the world that'll have boxes, you know with a slot and people pop their giving in there as they come in as they go out and that's more that's more the history of giving.

Calvin had the giving of alms affixed to the Lord's Supper. Now that would have put it in the worship service because he was big on the word supper is not something separate from the worship it's part of our worship and it's but he got this straightened out it needs to follow the preaching of the word because the Lord's Supper and Baptism are sacraments that only have meaning.

When given their meaning by the preached word. Don't tell you I think quite a lot of people have very superstitious and wrong views of the sacraments is because I have a dear friend who's currently worse being in a church in this state and it's not presbyterian but I've also heard of this in Presbyterian churches they have their their worship services and then they close and then they say, We're going to move over to the fellowship hall and have a meal and then we'll take the word supper.

Now they do that because they think they're reading the early church right about this this Eucharistic meal this this fellowship meal that it and the way Paul has to address their eating and drinking and getting drunk in First Corinthians 11 and. Then the Lord's Supper is tied into it there and so this this coin aid is fellowship meal is is something that rose up in the early church and so people are trying to regain that and we all have to do you know, the Bible is there directive not early church fathers, they get a lot right they get a lot wrong and, So that's a long answer to this.

Question. The offering came but.

When we had the Lord's separate covenant. You you will you if you and we've had a lot of people during this past several months since we've gone to screaming our services for some of our folks that can attend we've had a lot of people from all over the country tuning in.

And one of the one of the questions or comments a time or two has been why do you not have during the Lord's Supper why do you not have

instrument playing music in the background? And my answer our sessions answer is music is an element of worship distinct from the sacrament.

The sacrament is its own element of worship and we are to contemplate what we're doing at this mill what is this cup about what is this bread about who is to savior that we're handling were their hands what is he done for us and we shouldn't have our minds drawn away to.

Be thou my vision. I think of that not because I don't like the him because we saying yesterday or any other him. It should be fixed on that element of worship and I would say like Dr. Daddy wrote a whole article on this on this question against the offertory, so we know it was already creeping in by the 1870s at least and I think probably by.

Well, I think it came in. Late. 1700s actually is when I think it came into American Presbyterian life, but because it there weren't many instruments by then it was scattered but by the time instruments become more prevalent in the mid-1800s you start seeing it then too. I'll tell you my suspicion of white came in and I don't have any hard facts on this.

My suspicion is I talked to Thomas's pastor about this years ago about music and music city and music and churches and what a difficult thing that is because every musician wants to perform. You know, God's gifted them they have these talents and why can't I sing and why can't I play and worship?

I want to if I God. And I think probably as the organ came in to use. These organists said hey I could feel this dead space here, it's kind of quiet in here while we're doing this and that way you won't hear the jingle in jingle of coins and stuff.

I think if that's probably how it crept in. If you're going to have an offering. And good men disagree on whether it should be an element of worship or not. I think and we we do have an offertory at Covenant. But it is now not the typical opportunity which the offering has passed long sins and the and the the peace of music is still being played.

We have a few I sit up in the pulpit and I'm I meant like almost this level right here with the pianist. Piano is up in the balcony. And as he or she plays the brief offertory, they're constantly watching me and as soon as the offering is completed on the floor.

I just give him the. It's not always the twisted nose. It's just you know, some little something and he. Runs his last little augment and wraps it up and that's the end. So it's not a piece of music to be heard per se it is just to. Come to giving.

If you're going to have a company an offertory, I think that's the way it should be I happen to agree personally that Dr. Dabney is right that if it is an element of worship then we ought to treat it like a sacrament or anything else and let it stand alone.

And let people contemplate what God's done to them and for them and how much he's blessed them and how how they're loving to give to his work and what this is going to accomplish in his work instead of humming the tune to. A mighty horse versus our God. That's my answer.

How did? You guys stop. Well, I knew this real quick. How did the war of northern aggression which was not a topic this weekend? So I could say I don't know how did the war of northern aggression affect the churches in the 1860s and then there's some subject questions.

Where did the churches meet when buildings were taken over to be a hospital or stable or in the south when they were contraband as northern troops entered into cities and they would block them down. And not allowed people to enter into their church buildings. Where would the church meet if a town was taken over by the opposing side of the church to be allowed to meet I just answered that question.

So they wouldn't they'd end up meeting where they could whoever was there. That was the issue a lot of the pastors went to be chaplains. They were spread all over the countryside and and so churches met as they could during these extraordinary times. We're really good.

All right you're we're we're right full for your ministry for answering the questions it's 10:55 so anyone that did not come for the breakfast and the Q&A is wondering if we're having worth it if you guys answered their question but filtering over quickly.