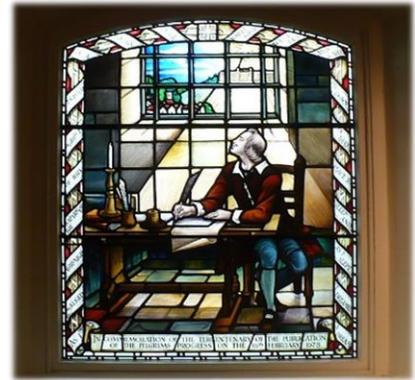


April 21, 2020

Good morning, Everybody.

Thumbing through the stack of catechism cards this morning I discovered that there apparently was no card 26 in the pile. I have a second stack of cards that are extras. But in looking through it I didn't find card 26 there either. It must be in a shirt pocket.



But while rifling the second stack I came across a card I'd entirely forgotten about; the one we added last Thanksgiving. It's not numbered, so I'd evidently not inserted it among the others.

As I stared at it, the question I'd posed for us early on in this series of letters was resurrected: *How has God providentially prepared us for this time?* It seems to me that the Thanksgiving catechism card was one of those preparations.

What does the card ask?

What shall I continually offer up to God for all His benefits to me?

It would be very, very good for us to keep our eye on *His benefits*. It's the truly Christlike frame of mind. The Scripture knows nothing of a sanctification that isn't attuned daily to the Lord's mercies, compassions, lovingkindnesses, comforts, and most of all—His felt presence . . . the ***benefits***.

We took our answer to the catechism question from just one verse.

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name (NASB; Hebrews 13:15).

You may recall (well . . . maybe we don't actually recall, so we better revisit it. . .) that *fruit of lips* is taken from Hosea 14:2, where *fruit* is literally "young bulls."

Linda grew up on a west Texas ranch that depended for its survival upon a good crop of Hereford calves every spring. She's mused at various times on what a **sacrifice** it must have been for an Israelite to give over to God each year the best of the season's new stock. Only someone making their living out of the anxious vagaries of being in agriculture can fully appreciate the cost and the faith of that kind of worship.

Certainly, one of the huge but perhaps entirely overlooked *benefits* of the New Covenant is that the *young bulls* of its sacrifices of praise are no more costly to us than the price of moving our lips a certain way. Try this. Say, *grumble, grumble, grumble, grumble, grumble, grumble*, and notice the shaping of your lips each time.

Now try saying, *praise, praise, praise, praise, praise*. Now what's the shaping?

How little it costs; nothing, actually. But if it springs spontaneously from turning an appreciative eye toward a benefit, entirely undeserved but gratefully acknowledged, God requires nothing more.

For all His benefits to me, I shall continually offer up to God, through Christ, a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

I'm going to try to not lose track of that Thanksgiving catechism card again. It's now going to take pride of place. It's going to be the first card from now on so that I never again pick up the pile without being greeted by it first thing. I'm also writing a little note on it, to remind me of today, the day during the virus crisis, when the Lord used it to prompt my lips.

Praying for You Today,

Pastor Minnick